

# China's Rise and Its Discursive Power Strategy

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Received: 27 March 2016 / Accepted: 28 March 2016  
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**Abstract** It is increasingly evident that China has attached more attention to discursive power in foreign policy since the early 21st century. Both top leaders and government agencies have been active in advocating for a new discourse on various international occasions. Previously, China has been reluctant to join the debate in international affairs, and been instead preoccupied with domestic affairs since the late 1970s. The situation has changed since 2009 because of China's rapid rise to become the world's second largest economy. With regard to the motivations behind the Chinese government's support for discursive power, the dominant explanation is based on the "rise of China" argument. However, this argument does not explain the causal relationship between China's rise and its discursive power strategy. So, this paper aims to clarify the motivation behind China's discursive power strategy through document reviews and interviews with mainstream scholars. It concludes that a discursive power strategy has been the fundamental principle of the Communist Party of China since its establishment in 1921. Since China's adoption of an opening-up policy in 1978, this tradition has been suppressed but not eliminated entirely by top leaders. As China continues to rise on the world stage, the principle will drive China to create a new political model rather than be a mere follower of the established political order.

**Keywords** China's rise · Discursive power · Chinese diplomacy

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## 1 Introduction

The politics of discourse is one of the most recent topics of debate among scholars of international relations, with increasing numbers of scholars around the world beginning to conduct international relations studies from a discursive perspective. In fact, discourse studies has been a very important part of the IR academic community since 1980, previously emerging from post-colonialism, and before that from postmodernism, all of which highlight discursive elements, such as culture, ideology and other norms, as a special kind of social power resource. These perspectives hold different views on power than established mainstream theory (Foucault 1972a, b). In Western liberal societies, discourses of power are almost exclusively adversarial and based on social competition. Power tends to be associated with competition at best or coercion and domination at worst. These alternative perspectives, however, suggest that the way we act in relation to a subject is not the most important thing, but rather it is how we think and talk about it, and who thinks and talks about it. Regardless of other ideas about discourse, the idea of discursive power has already been popularized inside the academic community. Nearly all powers, not only established powers such as the United States, but also emerging powers such as China, Brazil and India, increasingly seek discursive power advantages through various means.

In reality, China places more emphasis on discursive power than other states. As a rising world power, Chinese leaders have paid much more attention to discursive power in international affairs. In particular, China frequently proposes international initiatives under the rhetoric of supporting the discursive power of developing countries. What's more, China takes seriously the reform of the IMF, WTO, World Bank, etc., strongly challenging the so-called unfair international system dominated by Western powers (Xi 2014a). So, as a still-rising power, how China expresses itself will definitely determine its relationship with the established powers. Although this paper focuses solely on China's perspective of discursive power, it remains relevant to the potential new international order (which will be determined by many players); because China, as a newcomer, believes that the established order was solely drafted by Western powers. How China imagines the future and how it shapes the discourse of the future international order will absolutely impact the nature of its future interactions.

Based on these considerations, this paper focuses on China's discursive strategy and tries to explain briefly why China has such strong incentives to focus on this topic. This paper will ask how China understands discursive power, why China has placed it as one of its most important strategic pillars in the coming decades, and what China hopes to gain by doing so. In particular, the paper will challenge the dominant explanation of power transition theory, which sets out that China's discursive power strategy is just the result of China's rising power. On the contrary, its discursive power strategy is determined by China's new discourse domestically, rather than the new power structure internationally.

## 2 China's Understanding of Discursive Power

The Communist Party of China has placed emphasis on international discursive power since its establishment. Particularly for top leaders, discursive power is regarded as significant factor in determining their political power distribution in the party. And Chairman Mao Zedong pointed out that, “He who is inferior to Marx is not a Marxist; he who is equal to Marx is also not a Marxist; only he who is better than Marx is a real Marxist” (Wang 1979). Keen to pursue discursive power, the CPC Central Committee established the principle of independence at the Zunyi Conference in January 1935, and decided to maintain a level of freedom of discursive power in the Comintern. To dispel skepticism within the party about whether “the people living in the mountain valley can produce Marxism” after the rectification movement in Yan’an in 1941, the Chinese Communists took Maoism as their guiding position and stood up to the Soviet Union, further pursuing discursive power. After the People’s Republic of China was founded, from December 1959 to February 1960, in conversation to political economics of Soviet Union (excerpt), Mao Zedong pointed out clearly that, “the Communist Party of any country and the thinkers of any country must create new theories, write new books and have their own theorists” (Mao 1999). To defend China’s discursive power, China launched great debates with the Soviet Union around the principles of leadership of the proletariat, Marxism, revisionism, etc., some of which contributed to some extent to the ultimate breakdown of the Sino-Soviet alliance.

From the late 1970s although China tried to maintain a low profile attitude of noninterference overseas, it still endeavored to develop discursive power domestically, and made efforts to improve its ideology and system of discursive power. After the great debate on “Standards for judging the truth” in the 1970s, the overthrow of the “Two Whatevers”, and the development of the idea of “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”; additional systems of discursive power have been proposed and established, including the important thought of the “Three Represents”, the “Scientific outlook on development”, “Harmonious society and Harmonious world”, and the “Chinese dream”, each of which has furthered the domestic discursive power of Marxism in China.

In recent years, Chinese leaders have increasingly emphasized discursive power at home and overseas. President Xi Jinping coined the Chinese dream in late 2012 and launched a strong wave of campaigns for a new political discourse domestically and internationally. Under the umbrella of the Chinese dream, Xi has also proposed multiple international initiatives, such as the One Belt One Road program and the Concept of Comprehensive Security, a new type of international relations based on win–win cooperation and upholding justice while pursuing shared interests, since he came to power in 2012 (Yang 2013). All these initiatives can be regarded as China’s endeavors for new discursive power domestically and internationally. China hopes to expand the influence of “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” abroad through strategic efforts to build discursive power, especially to delegitimize the “China threat” theory overseas, dispel the doubts of other countries caused by the rapid increase in China’s economic capabilities, and fully integrate into the international

community. However, there remain some inaccurate views about how to understand China's discursive power, and opinions are not entirely uniform. Not only is the Chinese leadership's description of discursive power vague, but there are also many differences between decision-makers in diplomacy, propaganda, and foreign affairs, and between groups of scholars, especially since coordination and consultation mechanisms between various departments are not perfect. This produces a lot of paradoxical behavior on the issue of discursive power, causing confusion in the international community. Specifically, there are currently five views about China's international discursive power:

First, some regard discursive power as the "right to speak", deeming that as long as one has the right to speak, he will have discursive power. Some articles interpret the so-called right to speak as the right to speak without real understanding, or even think that the "right to speak" is the right to be heard and "have a say" (Zhang 2010b). These scholars, mostly from Marxism studies within China, believe that the capitalist system dominates the international system and blocks opportunities for discourse for developing countries. So, China can upgrade its discursive power through consolidating its ideological domination around the world (Wang 2013a), or through upholding a high level of confidence in its values, advancing its foreign language capacity, enhancing its international communication ability, explaining clearly the true meaning of the success of the Chinese road to the world, enhancing the discourse around socialist core values at the international level, and demonstrating the true appeal of Chinese values (Yu and Su 2015). This opinion is flawed, as the moral critique of the Western discourse is inappropriate because the discursive power of Western countries is not only dependent on holding the monopoly right to speak. The core of discursive power consists of power relations, and the nature of discursive power is not related to any "right", but rather to "power".

Second, some equate discursive power with the "power discourse", deeming that as long as national strength increases, discursive power grows accordingly. Considering modern China's experience of international political humiliation, most scholars of international relations adhere to the idea that backward nations tend to be disadvantaged at the hands of other states, and are unable to obtain significant discursive power (Zhang 2009). Such an opinion is common among Chinese people. It inappropriately equates discursive power with the "power to speak", and deems that the key to China's discursive power is to enhance China's national strength, and that discourse is only the expression of power (Meng 2015). In fact, there does not exist a correlation between discourse and economic or military strength. The militarily weaker party may have more "right to speak" than the militarily stronger party. The Vatican, for example, is a "state within a country", surrounded by Italy, but nobody will deny that it has more international discursive power than Italy (Knopp 1997).

Third, some regard discursive power as the "power of the media", deeming that once you have the power of the media, you will master the "right to speak". A large number of scholars in journalism and communication believe that the "right to speak" is determined by whoever controls the media, and that China can obtain discursive power by strengthening the internationalization of Chinese media (He

2015; Bai 2015). The group to whom the media belongs will naturally spread their discourse in the media. The most fundamental reason why China lacks international discursive power is because it does not control the media well enough (Wang 2009; Liu 2010; Liang 2009; Hu 2014). However, discursive power does not depend on the media. A persuasive example is that despite the fact that the United States holds the world's largest media machine, and has significantly increased its output of media broadcasts to the Middle East Persian Gulf region since 2001, anti-American sentiment has risen rapidly in the Middle East since 2001, and the "right to speak" of the United States in the region has been seriously damaged.<sup>1</sup>

Fourth, some regard discursive power as "soft power", deeming that discursive power depends on moral standards and cultural strength, and that as long as the country's culture and values are propagated, discursive power will be expanded. Since Joseph Nye of Harvard University first proposed the concept of "soft power", attention has turned from the tangible "hard power" of territory, armaments, military, scientific and technological progress, economic development, geographic expansion, military combat, etc., to the more intangible "soft power" of culture, values, influence power, ethics, cultural inspiration, etc. (Nye 2004, 2008). Some scholars assume there is a link between discursive power and soft power. They deem that as a country's moral standards rise, its ability to formulate discourse will also expand (Gao 2007; Tang 2008; Zhao 2015; Dai 2015). Needless to say, a country's cultural and moral level is an important component in international discourse, but cultural and moral development does not necessarily lead to the enhancement of a country's discourse. Familiarity with a country's culture and history will not automatically translate into international discourse. Transformation of a country's cultural soft power to discourse also needs a "strategic pivot". Through diplomacy, trade, propaganda, international non-governmental exchanges and many other channels, and the integration of all aspects of cross-cultural and cross-border exchanges and the coordination of all resources, cultural soft power advantages could be translated into increased discursive power.

Fifth, some regard discursive power as "diplomatic skill", deeming that discursive power depends largely on political operations and idea contributions, and as long as a country enhances its diplomatic ability, discursive power can also be strengthened. Some researchers of international relations and foreign affairs regard discourse as an important indicator of national diplomatic skills, analyzing the discourse issue under the backdrop of the rise of modern China, and considering it an integral part of its national grand strategy (d' Hooghe 2007, 2010, 2014; Tan 2013; Wang 2013b). From this point of view, the core of China's discourse consists of political power, and, as China grows, it should be prepared to assume more international responsibility, adopt a more transparent foreign policy, focus more on relations with neighboring and European countries, and when strategic reputation and economic interests are in conflict, adopt the principle that economic interests are subordinate to strategic prestige (Yan 2007, 2014). China only has two choices: China could become part of the Western "kingship", but that means it must change

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<sup>1</sup> June 13th 2006. America's image slips, but allies share US concerns over Iran, Hamas: no global warming alarm in the US, China. *Pew Research Center*.

its political system and become a democratic country. Another choice is to establish China's own system which appears to be the current direction of China's foreign strategy (Yan and Jin 2009). Scholars make clear that China should be brave enough to challenge the universal values of the West, and establish China's own discourse (Pan 2008). There are scholars who believe that international discourse reflects a country's ability to operate politically and contribute ideas. The ability to operate politically is mainly embodied in agenda-setting, rule-making capacity and international mobilization ability, while the ability to contribute ideas is mainly embodied in the ability to propose and promote new ideas and new concepts. To enhance China's international discursive power, we must greatly improve China's ability to operate politically and contribute ideas (Xu 2009). This opinion captures the key point that the clearer the political goals are and more mature the entire system is, the greater the international discourse will be. However, limiting the scope of discourse to political and diplomatic factors may bring short-term enhancement of the discourse, but in the long-term, may leave it unable to be consolidated entirely. China does not only need to establish its discourse politically, but also economically, socially, and culturally to consolidate its material foundation and social infrastructure.

All of these misunderstandings are not only very common among the leaders but also among the public. The main problem is that understanding of China's discourse comes mainly from just a few considerations and does not convey the real meaning of the discourse, limiting the discourse's strategy and its implementation. The reasons why such cognitive confusions exist are mainly related to China's long-standing weak position in modern history and traditional Chinese culture. Its long-term weak position caused China to mistakenly believe that only as a country becomes strong will it have discursive power, regardless of whether or not it proposes a new discourse and whether the discourse itself is rational and legitimate. In addition, the traditional Chinese culture regards discourse as the monopoly of knowledge, morals and status, standards and differences in science and technology levels and approaches to ethics between China and the West also limit the Chinese understanding of the nature of discourse.

Discourse is a concept adopted by many postmodern thinkers such as Michel Foucault. From these thinkers' points of view, the discourse expresses power relationships and helps to build and maintain a certain social order, which is generally considered the order in keeping with the interests of those who are dominant (Foucault 1972a, b, 1977). Discursive power consists of three elements: first, power facts are the fundamental base of discursive power. Only those powers that can maintain and overturn the social order can obtain discursive power. He who controls the discourse also controls the reality created by the discourse. Second, the shared rules among various social groups are at the core of discursive power. Language has its own rules and symbols, which are just a means of discourse, and their purpose is to create order. The key to taking control of discourse is to draft rules of priority in distributing resources—whether these rules are fully based on linguistic rules is not important. Third, social practice is the pivot of discursive power. The intermediary link between power facts and shared rules is a social

practice. Formation of discourse cannot be divorced from social practice, since social practice makes the discourse a reality.

So, discursive power is some kind of relational power which derives from the positioning of social factors by specific, usually interactive, discourse practice. And discourse is based on specific rules and logic that in turn are based on power facts. It relies on social practice to achieve the connection between shared rules and power facts, and thus, forms specific power relations. From an international political studies perspective, the discursive power of a country primarily depends on particular social facts and whether the position of power is clear or not. If the position is not clear, then the foundation of power facts is not strong and so it cannot obtain international discourse. At the same time, a country's discourse is also subject to shared rules and social practices. If a country cannot establish shared rules reflected by its position in power relations effectively, it cannot reinforce the relationship between the discourse system and power facts, damaging the discourse. One country can garner international discursive power by uniting power facts, shared rules and social practice together.

### 3 Discursive Power as China's Strategic Pillar

The fact that China has recognized the importance of international discursive power is closely related to its accumulated economic gains attributed to the reform and opening-up policy. Over the past three decades, sustained economic growth has greatly enhanced China's comprehensive national strength and continuously expanded its overseas interests. Meanwhile, China's emergence has aroused worldwide attention; and during the last decade of the 20th century in particular, various unreasonable concepts have sprung up in the international arena, such as "The China Threat", "The Collapse of China", "China's Exports Inflation", "China's Economic Growth Exaggerated", "China as an Opportunity", "RMB Appreciation", "China's Threat on Energy", "China's Flourishing Age", "China's Responsibility" and "China's Neocolonialism". These conjectures are full of doubts about China, and have become obstacles in its diplomatic activities (Zoellick 2005; Kissinger 1997; Nye 2005; Bernstein and Munro 1997; Chang 2001; Bergsten 2008; Rice 2008; Ikenberry 2008; Christensen 2011; Johnston 2013). Among these opinions, some are well-meaning, some are unfair prejudices and some are conspiracies concocted by certain countries to Westernize China. Therefore, casting as illegitimate the "China Threat Theory" is regarded as a long-term strategic task by China's senior governmental officials (Li and Lu 2001).

Ever-changing international opinions have shaken Deng Xiaoping's "Non-Dispute" principle. A progressive China needs to establish its own international discursive power, and debates on this issue have been on the upsurge in different circles. For example, the linguistic field came up with the discursive power of the Chinese language, the commercial industry appeals for discursive power on the issue of price, ideological sectors call for discursive power in promotion, and diplomatic organs want discursive power in formulating international political agendas, etc. (Zhang 2008). Although some proposals may have distorted the

original idea of discursive power by narrowing down or generalizing the original concept, it cannot be denied that Chinese consciousness of international discursive power is growing rapidly, especially after its accession to the WTO in 2001, when China successively won the right to hold the 2008 Olympic Games and the World Expo 2010. Chinese leaders have become increasingly aware that China should be accustomed to being the focus of international attention and should actively introduce the world to a more genuine vision of China, creating an objective international opinion about China and building an image of a responsible power (Wen 2003, 2012; Xi 2014b, a; Li 2006, 2015; Liu 2012). In particular, since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, China has begun to increasingly highlight its discursive power strategy in governance, and has attributed ever-higher strategic significance to discursive power. Besides strengthening international communications, China also emphasizes its influence in high technology, international institutions and other international affairs (Xi 2015b). So, China has gradually formulated a strategy for discursive power that contains setting facts straight, innovating rules, and making breakthroughs in social practice.

### 3.1 Power Facts and Strategic Objectives

Certain objectives for discursive power strategy are generally determined by a state on the basis of judgments about discursive facts. China used to be a nation endowed with strong international discursive power. Five thousand years of civilization have created a rich culture, exerting a far-reaching impact on the discursive pattern of China's neighboring areas and the world at large. After the establishment of New China in 1949 and against the backdrop of the Cold War, the international discursive power of China's revolution, relying on Maoism and a series of both domestic and diplomatic strategies, was stressed by the world socialist camp and other developing countries. China's international discursive power was not challenged until the implementation of economic reforms and the opening-up policy. Things started to deteriorate when China chose to join the international system dominated by Western values. Struck by the end of the Cold War and globalization, China sank into a "structural weakness" on the issue of discursive power (Zhang 2010a). Besides, as China pursued the principle of "keeping a low profile" (*taoguang yanghui*) it remained silent on several strategic issues, which has greatly constrained China's discursive power and precipitated its struggle with three contradictions involving discursive pressure from both home and abroad.

First, in terms of its economic system, China is facing discursive pressure about whether to position itself as a socialist or a capitalistic state. For instance, in the disputes over "China's market economy status", China has been under consistent discursive pressure from the international community. The reason is that China is a "heterogeneous" socialist country (Krauthammer 1995). Ever since the 1990s, the "failure" of the socialist camp has imposed unprecedented ideological pressure on China. Western discursive attacks used terms such as "Grand Failure", "Collapse of China", "China Threat", "China's Responsibility", and "China's Neocolonialism", or the current "assertive China" and "China's Arrogance". Socialism with Chinese Characteristics has remained under high pressure from Western discursive power



(Brzezinski 1989; Chang 2001; Nye 2010; Swaine 2010). For most Western audiences, China is still regarded as an abnormal regime because of its socialist and authoritarianism system under the political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Not only is their economy still growing, it has been said, but they violate their people's rights—the “butchers of Beijing” (Barr 2011).

Second, in terms of social character, China is facing a discursive positioning dilemma—whether to be a developed or developing country. Entering the new century, China has gradually grown into a new economic giant gaining worldwide attention. China's international status and influence are growing dramatically and due to certain development characteristics that are different from other developing countries, the international community has become skeptical of China's identity as a developing country and many developing nations no longer treat China as an equal counterpart. Although China has initially taken on the shape of a giant country in light of its aggregated economic power, the size of the population has offset the significance of its GDP growth. It is hard for China's top leaders to persuade the domestic audience to acknowledge China as a developed country or to convince the international audience to identify China as developing country (Pu 2012; Pu and Schweller 2014). So, over the long-term China will remain a developing country as determined by its social development level and a great gap in per capita development level compared with developed states. There is a discrepancy between the characteristics of a superpower and of a developing country, driving China into crises of discursive rupture when expressing itself to the outside world (Zhao 2010).

Third, in terms of values, China is facing a discursive positioning dilemma—whether to recognize the so-called universal values or adhere to the Chinese model. In the context of the current globalized world, the mainstream discourse is dominated by Western values. Although China is able to accept Western ideologies and values concerning freedom, democracy, human rights and rule of law, it is unwilling to regard them as “universal values” and even explicitly rejects Western “universal values” such as constitutionalism and judicial independence, let alone accept the individualism contained in this model (Cohen 2015). In the eyes of some Chinese scholars, China's model of development is breaking through the monopoly of Western universal values and even has potential to go beyond Western modernization (Wang 2013c; Zhang 2011, 2014).

Under the discursive pressure generated from these structural contradictions, China's strategy to enhance its discursive power has transformed from grassroots opinions to actual governmental actions. China's recognition of discursive power stemmed from anti-Western sentiments fermented in the mid-late 1990s. From *China Wakes*, and *The China that Can Say No*, to *Unhappy China* published in 2009, it can be seen that a sense of nationalism has spread from the grassroots level to the academic and cultural field (Li and Liu 1996; Fang et al. 1999; Song and Wang 2009). Entering the 21st century, more and more scholars are showing a strong negative attitude to the hegemony of Western discourse. They have launched debates in the academic community on “universal values” and “the Chinese model” which encourage Chinese academics to compete with their Western counterparts for new political discourse (Pan 2008; Chen 2010; Zhang 2011). At the 17th CPC National Congress in 2007, President Hu Jintao for the first time elevated

the promotion of China's soft power to a national strategic height, and formulated a key strategic objective to strengthen Chinese culture's competitiveness overseas for the sake of winning international discursive power (Hu 2007). From then on, China has made it a strategic goal to enhance its discursive power by insisting on influencing the overall strategic situation on the basis of soft power. More significantly, China's new generations of top leaders insist that these ideologies shall be viewed under specific historical, social and cultural conditions, for example, the issue of human rights should involve concrete rights and specific content; abstract human rights applicable to the entirety of mankind shall never be accepted (Xi 2013). For President Xi and his colleagues, discursive power is regarded not only as an important part of the soft power of China, but also as substantial indicator for realizing the Chinese dream. China will be great nation domestically and great power internationally.

### 3.2 Shared Rules and the Strategic Core

Successive top leaders of the CPC have always paid significant attention to theoretical innovation as an important pillar to win political legitimacy. In December 1978, China's leader Deng Xiaoping put forward, "When everything has to be done by the book, when thinking turns rigid and blind faith is the fashion, it is impossible for a party or a nation to make progress. Its life will cease and that party or nation will perish" (Deng 1994a). Ideological emancipation, for the CPC, is the source of all energy, as well as the inexhaustible motivating force for the innovation of discourse. In terms of discursive rules, Chinese leaders are more likely to use the concept of "Chinese characteristics". At the opening statement of the 12th Conference of the CPC on September 1st 1982, Deng Xiaoping pointed out:

"Our construction of modernization must be approached from China's actual conditions. Whether it is revolution or construction, we should pay attention to studying and learning from foreign experience, however, stereotyping the mode and experience of other countries will never be successful. In this regard, we have had many lessons. The need to combine the universal truth of Marxism with China's specific reality and go our own way to build Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, this is the basic conclusion we learn from historical experience" (Deng 1994a, b).

Since then, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics has become the banner of the CPC, and China's leaders have sought to develop and incorporate new content under this banner, such as Jiang Zemin's important concept of the Three Represents, and Hu Jintao's concepts of Scientific development, and Harmonious society and Harmonious world.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, thanks to the Iraq War and the global financial crisis, the "Washington Consensus" has suffered severely compared to the "Beijing Consensus" in the eyes of Latin American and Eastern and Southern European states. The abuses and defects of neoliberal groups in the US and Britain have increasingly been exposed, accelerating the decline of the United States model and the rise of Chinese social discursive power (Ramo 2007). As Chinese leaders

accelerated the exploration of a new development model and support for the diversification of development patterns both domestically and abroad, senior Chinese Government officials began to reveal their confidence about China's discursive power. At the beginning of 2003, Chinese leader Hu Jintao advocated the Scientific Outlook on Development on various occasions, putting it at the core of China's discursive power strategy. The proposal of the Scientific Outlook on Development typifies Hu Jintao's approach to discursive power. On October 14, 2003 at the Third Plenary Conference of the 16th Central Committee of the CPC, the Scientific Outlook on Development was advanced in a clear, formal way for the first time in the party's literature. It advocated insisting on a holistic approach, putting the people first, establishing a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development concept and promoting the all-round development of economic society and human well being.<sup>2</sup> To promulgate and implement the Scientific Outlook on Development, the CPC organized a large number of learning activities. In addition to initiatives at the Central Party School, the National School of Administration and Party Schools at all levels, in March 2005, the CPC also established the China Pudong Cadre College, the China Jingangshan Cadre College, and the Yanan College of China as three state-level training bases. These initiatives aimed to train a large majority of leading cadres. In addition, in January 2005, the party developed educational activities on the theme of "education on maintaining the advanced nature of Communism" and "studying and implementing the Scientific Outlook on Development", to consolidate the political discursive power of the Scientific Outlook on Development. As a result, at the 17th National Congress of the CPC, held on October 15, 2007, the Scientific Outlook on Development was written into the CPC Constitution, alongside Deng Xiaoping theory and the important thought of the Three Represents, and was defined as the scientific system of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. In addition, Chinese leaders have strongly advocated the concept of Harmonious society, Harmonious world, and the advancement of China's national innovation system, as strategic tools to increase the discursive power of China.

In 2008, after the international financial crisis, the Chinese economy continued to develop and boom. In 2010, its GDP overtook Japan's, and China became the world's second biggest economic power. The rise of China's comprehensive national strength has boosted Chinese leaders' confidence in the improvement of China's discursive power. At the 17th Plenary Session of the Central Committee held in 2010, Hu Jintao put forward ideas about global ideological communication, interaction, and confrontation as the new characteristics of China's discursive power. He also realized that this was an important period of strategic opportunity for China, in which China should move forward to a new historical period (Liu et al. 2010). Therefore, from the long-term perspective of China's senior leaders, it is possible to face some competition from different models or actors during the process of practicing and advancing the grand reform and opening-up strategy. At

<sup>2</sup> 29th September 2010. The Political Bureau of Central Committee of Communist Party of China hold meeting and discussed the document presented for the Fifth Plenum of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (*zhonggong zhongyang zhengzhiju zhaokai huiyi, taolun ni Tiqing shiqi jie wuzhong quanhui shenyi de wenjian*). *People's Daily*.

this point in time, China should develop and improve its international influence and the appeal of the Chinese model and constantly enrich its meaning and competitiveness.

Since 2012, Xi Jinping and other top leaders have paid much more attention to discursive power internationally and domestically. President Xi proposed the high-profile concept of the Chinese dream, which he markets frequently during his visits abroad. Xi, to some extent, has given up the previous guideline of keeping low profile on foreign affairs, and is instead striving for achievements (Yan 2014). The new leaders have presented a succession of strategic ideas under the umbrella of the Chinese dream. In his clarification on the 13th five-year plan to the CPC Central Committee in 2015, Xi stated clearly that the future of competition in comprehensive strength among nations will definitely be determined by the effectiveness of a country's innovation systems. So, in the coming decades, China should focus on strategic innovations and upgrade its scientific innovation capabilities, using national standards, and international discursive power (Xi 2015c). All these endeavors demonstrate that discursive power has already become one of the important components of China's grand strategy.

### 3.3 Social Practice and Strategic Advocacy

Improving a country's international discursive power involves a combination of power facts and the shared rules system in practice. It includes promoting the national capacity for shaping and even solidifying the international diplomatic arena. For China, its diplomacy will meet unprecedented challenges if and when a clash occurs between the Chinese model and Western ideals of universal values. Chinese leaders have begun to implement China's discursive power strategy on the international stage since 2003, and may face a number of international expectations and/or misunderstandings about China as a result.

Chinese leaders promoted debate about "China's peaceful rise" at the international level in 2003, in the first attempt to break through Deng Xiaoping's "Non-dispute" principle since the in the 1980s. The core force behind this debate is the drive to change China's disadvantaged international discursive power position. Zheng Bijian, Executive Vice President of the Central Party School, and the creator of "to tell the world a true China", first advanced the idea of China's peaceful rise at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2003—he advocated the "new road for China's peaceful rise and the future of Asia", and said that China must choose to rise through peaceful means over the long-term (Liu et al. 2010; Zheng 2004). China's policy makers and analysts believe that a rising China should try to avoid the competitive policies of Weimar Germany, Imperial Japan and the former Soviet Union during the Cold War. According to Professor Zheng Bijian, "Under the present international situation, China only can choose the "Peaceful Rise", use the peaceful international environment for its development, and maintain the world peace at the same time through its development" (Zheng 2003). Professor Zheng Bijian used to serve as a senior government official and has close links with the current leadership. Later, Premier Wen Jiabao used the term "peaceful rise" for the first time at Harvard University in the United States. He claimed that the rise of

China is a peaceful rise and that a rising China will not harm any country in the world, and encouraged the new generation of leaders to begin exploring for a new development road (Wen 2003). On February 17, 2004, at a commemoration ceremony for the 110th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth, Chinese President Hu Jintao clearly defined "Sticking to the road of peaceful rise" as the highest national principle (Hu 2003). In the following months, President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao publically discussed China's peaceful rise three times, receiving domestic and the international attention.

Many Chinese scholars and analysts question the meaning and accuracy of these new words. Some international observers also note some of their shortcomings, for instance arguing that the term is ambiguous, and may contradict with the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue (Glaser and Medeiros 2007). Many people doubt that China can "rise", believing that China's multiple economic and social problems impede its rise, and will interrupt its progress in becoming a powerful state. They insist that "rise" is an optimistic portrayal of China's current social and economic development (Chu 2004). Others oppose the idea because of its meaning of "power transfer". They believe using this terminology to relieve tensions with neighboring countries cannot help in practice (Yan 2004). Many people think that the term "peaceful rise" is provocative, and can be easily misinterpreted as meaning that China is keen to reach for hegemony like United States, and is trying to expand. In particular, many leaders of China's neighboring countries have expressed varying degrees of concern. Among this group, the most typical viewpoint expressed is that of former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who believes that Asia-Pacific countries welcome China's prosperity and development, but are also concerned about their own national security (Lee 2009).

In their discussions of China's peaceful rise strategy at home and abroad, Chinese leaders began to use the new formulation "the road of China's peaceful development". On April 26th 2004, Vice President Zeng Qinghong proposed the term "peaceful development" to expound on China's road of development at the opening ceremony of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) 60th session in Shanghai (Zeng 2004). In April 2004, and at the Boao Forum for Asia, Chinese President Hu Jintao used the term "peaceful development" when talking about China's foreign strategy (Hu 2004). In September 2004, at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee, China formally announced to the world that it will stick to the road of peaceful development.<sup>3</sup> In December 2005, the Chinese government published a White Paper on China's road of peaceful development, elaborating on its contents, and proposing a clear goal of "build[ing] a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity" (Information Office of the State Council ed 2005). Some scholars summarized it as, "Rise in peace, by peace and for peace" (Wang 2004). At that point, the mantra of "stick to the road of peaceful development, and build a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity" became the guiding

<sup>3</sup> September 27th 2004. Reflections on studying the decision of the central committee of Chinese communist party about enforcing the governing capacity of the Chinese Communist party. *People's Daily*.

principle in China's strategy to improve its discursive power, and has since been regularly expressed in the G20, APEC and other United Nations international forums.

Since 2012, President Xi Jinping and other top leaders have also stuck to the fundamental principle of the path of peaceful development. However, Xi increasingly highlights China's core interests. Particularly on Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang and human rights issues, the new generation of leaders adopts a strong position towards the international community. Meanwhile, China begins to be more proactive on island and maritime disputes with neighboring countries. China shows a strong attitude to Japan over the Diaoyu Islands dispute, and has established an Air Defense Identification Zone over the East China Sea, created the Sansha municipal city under the jurisdiction of Hainan Province and launched island constructions over the South China Sea. All these behaviors were previously unimaginable, and have also been criticized by some stakeholders. Besides, China has become more active in developing many international economic institutions such as the BRICS Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund etc. More and more scholars and experts believe that China will challenge the existing international order, and will become another world superpower (Johnston 2013; Pettis 2013). In fact, this may be the inescapable result of China's advocacy for international discursive power.

## 4 Strategic Tools of Chinese Discursive Power

In China's institutional context, there are many tools available within the political, economic, cultural, and educational sectors, as well as among social actors, to implement China's discursive power strategy. After the establishments of the PRC, all of these actors were required follow the guidelines drafted by Communist Party of China as the only ruling party in China. In reality, these actors did not have enough autonomy in decision-making processes. However, after the opening-up policy began in the late 1970s, the situation changed. It has become increasingly evident that more and more players are becoming involved in the game, as China increasingly integrates into a globalized world.

### 4.1 Ideological Sectors

Among participants in the implementation of discursive power strategy, the politically stronger propaganda sector has played a more significant role than the diplomatic sector. Traditionally, ideological work is unified under the leadership of the Small Leading Group of Publicity and Ideological & Political Work, which is the decision-making advisory and coordinating body for publicizing the ideological work of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, and an ad hoc organization subordinate to the Political Bureau. In addition, its members are often indeterminate, and include principals from the main divisions of the party, government and publicity. They are usually constituted by the Head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Director of the State Council

Information Office, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Culture, the Director General of International Radio, Film and Television, and so on. Moreover, the group is attended by principals from the *Xinhua* News Agency, *People's Daily* and other relevant departments, who perform the functions of coordination, communication, decision-making, deployment and monitoring the implementation of foreign policy and the relationship between the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau and the propaganda departments of the party and government. This group is rarely exposed in the media and highly secret in its work procedures, but it regularly convenes meetings and performs unified management over propaganda, ideas, culture, ideology, spiritual civilization construction and other areas. To strengthen the ideological leadership, in 2003 the CPC Central Committee nominated Mr. Li Chuangchun, in charge of ideological work, for full-time membership of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau. This nomination makes the ideological leadership team even more powerful, and the ideological leadership more vigorous in China's political system because the standing members of the Political Bureau hold the most powerful position in China's political decision-making process. Therefore, the mechanism of ideological leadership in China has been strengthened, and many interviewed media professionals have expressed strict control of public opinion since 2003.

In China, most media organizations are state owned media and controlled strictly by the party and government. So, it is impossible for mass media to violate the directions from central government, with very few exceptions such as *Nanfang Zhoumo* and other liberal media. From the beginning of the reform and opening-up era, the Chinese government has strengthened its overseeing and manipulation of mass media reports to manage mainstream public opinion and consolidate domestic discursive power. The real challenge to China's discursive power strategy is from the cyber sphere. As a milestone, China gained access to the international internet in 1994 and began to be an important player in the cyber sphere. In 2014, there were more than 648 million active internet users, 331 million Internet Protocol Addresses, near to 20 million domain names, and 3.35 million websites in China (China Internet Network Information Center 2015). Over the past 20 years, China has become the world's number two cyber power. However, there were more than 16 agencies involved in internet managerial affairs and no unified managerial system for cyber affairs before May 3, 2011, when the State Council decided to set up the State Office for Internet Information. To strengthen the management of cyber and information security, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC in 2013 made the decision to upgrade the internet leadership and managerial system. So, on February 27, 2014, the Central Internet Security and Informatization Leading Group were established, and President Xi Jinping was appointed as its Director. As the working office, the State Office for Internet Information provides staff and other coordinating services. With the establishment of these strong organs, China began to strengthen its management of cyber affairs. On July 6, 2015, the first draft of the Cyber Security Law of the PRC was published to invite suggestions for revision from public opinion. The draft indicates that China wants to consolidate discursive power on cyber security domestically, and that China will become more active in participating in international cyber security dialogue, and seek more international

discursive power on cyber affairs. Typical examples include the election of Mr. Lu Wei, director of State Office for Internet Information, and Jack Ma, President and CEO of Alibaba Networking Technology Co., as members of the Global Internet Governance Alliance, and the selection of Jack Ma as Co-chairman of the Global Internet Governance Alliance Council in 2015.

## 4.2 External Publicity

Another important tool for China's discursive power strategy is external publicity. In China, external publicity is an overall, strategic project as well as a vital part of its entire management of foreign affairs. Since 2002, external publicity has become an important pillar of China's discursive power strategy, and China has invested increasing amounts of resources in international communication and promotion.

After China's accession to the WTO in 2001, China's leaders soon felt pressure from international public opinion. During the SARS epidemic of 2003, China experienced pressure from overseas public opinion for the first time (Jakes 2003), and the formulation of an external publicity strategy to cope with the pressure of international public opinion became an important part of China's diplomatic strategy. On September 19, 2004, the resolution of the Fourth Session of the 16th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) explicitly identified a new phase in the international community's attention towards the country, and said that it must be responded to properly by strengthening and improving external publicity work, actively carrying out international cultural exchanges to promote good international opinion environment further, and forming an international consensus environment which is beneficial to China's development (see footnote 3). This marked the first time that the CCCPC clearly proposed the idea of building an international consensus environment.

From that point on, the Central Committee expressly treated the creation of an objective and amicable consensus environment as one of the working focuses of its new phase in foreign strategy. On January 4, 2010, Mr. Li Changchun, one of the members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 17th CPC Central Committee, emphasized at the National Ministerial Conference for Communication that we must make new achievements on the publicity, ideological and cultural fronts by promoting our international communication capacity, holding discursive power and taking the initiative around the world (Xinhua News Agency 2010). That was the first time that Chinese leaders combined external communication with discursive power, and showed that they clearly regarded external communication as a strategic tool for promoting discursive power. In addition, at a national conference on publicizing China overseas held in January 2010, Mr. Wang Chen, Head of the International Communication Office of the CPC Central Committee, who holds special responsibility for international communication, emphasized during his talk that, to perform well in communication work in 2010, we needed to plan both the domestic situation and international situation as a whole, to hold discursive power, to take a leadership role, to promote our international communication ability and endeavor to match the power of China's international



voice with its economic and social development level and international status.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the promotion of China's international voice has become a function of China's international communication departments and has been included in China's international communication systems. Li Changchun's successor, Mr. Liu Yunshan, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the 18th CPC Central Committee, also highlights discursive power through international communication.

In China's international communication system, media plays a more significant role than diplomacy. For the media, drafting reported news and publicizing detailed facts is the first priority, and acts as a means to advance their position in the Chinese political system. Since 2003, China has created a favorable situation of solid progress and vigorous development in external publicity, with its contents and scope continuously expanded its method and meanings improved, and its institutions and mechanisms boldly upgraded. Under the leadership of the Foreign Publicity Leading Group and the China Central Publicity Department, China mainly relies on the mainstream media to carry out public outreach. This includes China Radio International, China Central Television, Xinhua News Agency, People's Daily, China Daily, Global Times and other mainstream media.

In 2002, China began the implementation of policies for the radio and television "go out project" and vigorously promoted the use of radio, television, cultural enterprises and products to project China's message. Named the "Voice of China", China Radio International makes great efforts to strengthen its global coverage, and it falls to China Radio International to broadcast all over the world. Currently, there are 43 languages (38 foreign languages and Chinese in four kinds of dialects) used to broadcast around the world. By the end of 2014, CCTV had 14 international channels, overseas landing operations around the world, cooperation with more than 400 local media organizations, and a total of 392 channels in 141 countries and regions. And total channel users are projected to number about 170.92 million. This covers nearly 4/5 of the population around the world, and broadcasts timely news coverage from around the world, making China's voice heard through daily reports and coverage of major events and global issues.

In addition to relying on domestic media, the Chinese government has also been paying increasing attention to the use of foreign media, especially since the 2008 Olympics greatly promoted the process of incorporating international media into China. Before the Beijing Olympics, the Chinese government relaxed control measures for foreign journalists and media so as to give more coverage by foreign-owned media. During their major visits abroad, Chinese leaders accept media coverage, publishing articles in foreign media, holding press conferences, interacting with the countries' local population, setting up information centers, and explaining complex theories in simple language to expound China's policy stance. This has made China appear more cooperative and responsible, resulting in a better image. Before the state visit to the United States on January 17th 2011, President Hu Jintao accepted

<sup>4</sup> 2010. National working conference on external publicity has deployed external publicity work this year (*quanguo duiwai yichuan gongzuo huiyi bushu jinnian waiyi gongzuo*. Xinhua News Agency. [http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2010-01/05/content\\_1503803.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2010-01/05/content_1503803.htm)).

invitations by the US newspapers *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* to host a joint written interview and answered reporters' questions. Following a similar approach in previous visits to Spain, Germany and the UK, Vice Premier Li Keqiang has published several articles. Publications in Spain's largest newspaper *National Paper*, Germany's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, the UK's *Financial Times* and others elicited warm reactions around the whole of Europe, and were described as "the charm of China's diplomacy in Europe" (Alderman 2011). During these visits, Chinese leaders President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, published their articles and initiatives to introduce to the local public to China and its foreign trade policies, and to give the west a more objective and fair understanding of China's accomplishments, which reflects China's diplomatic change. China has also increasingly emphasized the importance of network information management. Not only have government departments set up websites, but the media has also been encouraged to set up websites. More and more focus has been placed on mobile phones, blogs, micro blogs, social media and other new media outlets, and these efforts have had a profound impact on Chinese communication.

Generally, mass media is usually more radical than the government on public policy and tries to play the role of watchdog of public interests and works as criticizer to oversee government officials. However, under the guidelines of China's news rules, Chinese media usually report foreign policy strictly following Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) regulations and never challenge official statements. In China, media is the best friend of diplomats, and some diplomats are even former journalists. The situation has changed since the 2003 campaign for dealing with the SARS virus. In that campaign, the Chinese media began to play more radical role in foreign policy than ever before. It was permitted to disclose concealed details and even to criticize government officials. Since then, the Chinese media has gained more freedom to report on international affairs, and some media organizations have also began to conduct more ambitious strategies of internationalization, which is encouraged by the government. Therefore, compared with the Western media's mission of reporting facts, Chinese media takes on the task of advancing China's discursive power and soft power abroad. So, what Chinese media really cares about is not being recognized by others but gaining the legitimacy to lead the Chinese discourse. Essentially, what China wants is not only to be acknowledged as a great economic and military power, but also to be recognized as a super power in values, norms and other soft resources.

### 4.3 Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is a vital tool to enhance Chinese discursive power. As a matter of course, China's awareness of public diplomacy follows an unconscious-to-conscious process. At the start, there was no idea about public diplomacy in Chinese foreign diplomacy terminology—it was imported from Western world by some scholars in the early 1990s, when they introduced diplomatic studies to China. However, these endeavors were not acknowledged by the party and government leaders. And they still used similar words, such as external publicity (*duiwai*

xuanchuan) and people-to-people diplomacy (minjian waijiao), to describe formal communications between China and overseas audiences.

The situation was changed by the September 11 incident, because the United States began to identify the emergent significance of public diplomacy. Affected by the ever-increasing attention paid to public diplomacy by the USA after the 9/11 incident, the Chinese Foreign Ministry also incorporated public diplomacy into their foreign affairs. Starting from 2002, China Foreign Affairs University conducted a training program for junior officials, which included public diplomacy as an important component of the program and invited some professors to join the discussions. In 2003, the Foreign Ministry established a Public Diplomacy Division under the Information Department, which took charge of China's public diplomacy. From the beginning, this Division has usually dealt with the communication matters such as Open Day events, Internet management, news briefings and interviews by foreign journalists. For example, foreign ministers and top leaders usually have dialogues with the general public domestically and internationally through public speaking, interviews, online discussions and drafting articles in newspapers of other countries. In recent years, President Xi Jinping and Primer Li Keqiang have become more active in publishing the newspaper articles during their visits abroad. These endeavors can be regarded as Chinese public diplomacy for new discourse.

In 2009, President Hu Jintao mentioned public diplomacy, and people-to-people as well as cultural diplomacy, for the first time in a very important meeting, highlighting the significance of public diplomacy in China's foreign affairs. This statement is regarded as a milestone in China's public diplomacy efforts. Since then, more and more top leaders, government agencies and even social actors have joined in the development of public diplomacy. A typical example is that Mr. Zhao Qizheng, the director of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the CPPCC from 2008 to 2013, led a big campaign for public diplomacy studies. Other important leaders like China's State Councilors, Foreign Ministers and Culture Ministers are also actively involved in developing public diplomacy, to create new discourse within the international community. More substantially, as an institutional innovation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a new Public Diplomacy Office as an alternative to the Public Diplomacy Division of the Information Department. This change indicates that public diplomacy is the mandatory duty of all officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and its embassies and posts abroad, rather than just as the responsibility of the Information Department. As a result, Chinese ambassadors are required to make public lectures, accept media interviews, have dialogues with local communities, etc. MOFA has also established a coordinating mechanism among various ministries and agencies involved in foreign affairs, and have set up an advisory commission on public diplomacy with responsibility for evaluating the performance of Chinese public diplomacy. Besides MOFA, other institutions including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Commerce, and even local governments have also joined the public diplomacy team. Confucius Institutes, Chinese Culture Centers, the Beijing Olympic Games, the Shanghai Expo and other efforts can be seen as excellent examples of Chinese public diplomacy programs.

All these efforts, in the eyes of China's top leaders, are conferred same strategic mission of telling China's story to the world and enhancing the Chinese voice within

the international community. Particularly since the 18th Congress of the Communist Party China, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, China has launched a new wave of charm offensive campaigns worldwide, including first lady diplomacy, which are more progressive than before. All these efforts are intended to defend Chinese discourse and China's political system, and enhance the Chinese dream abroad. In addition, the Chinese government conducts public diplomacy activities in the military, trade and academic fields, adding to China's image by means of practical actions. Many overseas economic activities such as the One Belt One Road initiative, the New Model of Big Power Relationships, and the AIIB indicate increased foreign promotion activities, and are trying to express China's intentions and interests by internationally adopting this widely used public relations tool. Behind these efforts, China's top leaders just want to win discursive power on the world stage. And this mission has been clear and consistent from the beginning of China's advocacy of public diplomacy.

## 5 Conclusions

Since the end of the Cold War, influenced by the termination of the war and the Tiananmen Events, China has been treated negatively as a red and dangerous country (Bernstein and Munro 1997; Bork and Ding 2000; Kristof 1995). However, the international department of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has investigated the image of various countries in global public opinion since 2005. The results show that China's national image has been consistently rising in the minds of people around the world. Within the sample under investigation, there was not a country in which the number of people with a negative attitude towards China exceeded 50 percent among the total responses; instead, the number of people bearing the opinion that China has had an active and positive impact on the world exceeded those of the US and Russia.<sup>5</sup>

Similar results have been obtained from many civil investigation institutions such as the Pew Center. According to the Pew Center's latest report, China is viewed positively and has good image in 19 of 38 nations. China wins its highest ratings in Africa (70 %), Asia Pacific (57 %), Latin America (57 %) and predominantly Muslim Middle Eastern nations (52 %). However, China is seen less positively in much of Europe and North America. In the US, less than 40 % have a favorable view.<sup>6</sup>

How could all of these be possible? In term of power transition, China has seen an evident rise in economic and military power, but such a rise has not changed the power relationship between China and Western countries, especially between China and the US. The rise in China's power does not bring an underlying motive for structural change, and it is impossible to generate fundamental change in international public opinion from power transition. Rather, China's success depends more on China's foreign strategy. Instead of "Exporting Revolution" emphasized

<sup>5</sup> BBC civil investigations. [http://www.globescan.com/news\\_archives/bbc06-3/index.html](http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbc06-3/index.html).

<sup>6</sup> June 25th 2015. Key takeaways on how the world views the US and China. *Pew Research Center*. <http://www.pewresearch.org> (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/23/key-takeaways-on-how-the-world-views-the-u-s-and-china/> <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/china/>).

during the Mao Zedong times, what China advocates nowadays is non-interference with the domestic affairs of other countries, including the provision of assistance without any additional political conditions which provides quite a different development model from Western countries. All of these factors have formed an evident contrast with foreign policies conducted by the US over many years, including humanitarian intervention, development assistance with additional conditions regarding human rights and good governance, as well as aggressive diplomacy including alliance strengthening and regime change. In addition, in the views of international society, and especially those of emerging economies and developing countries, the Chinese development model has significant differences from the Washington Consensus model that is consistently promoted by the US, representing two alternative types of development route. However, the Iraq War in 2003 and the world financial crisis in 2008 crushed the development model led by the US and shook the US' international leadership in discursive power, hence, China's discursive power obtained great benefits.

Meanwhile, the improvement in China's image has also resulted from the success of China's diplomacy. Since 2003, the change in China's diplomacy has been mainly demonstrated in its establishment of the strategic route of Peace and Development. Different from the Western strategy of showing off their hard power, China has paid great attention in adopting strategic planning that focuses on enhancing its soft power while developing its hard power, taking a series of new measures in fields including ideology, external publicity and public diplomacy, and bringing forward a whole new set of discursive systems which are largely different from previous systems. The discursive system brought forward by China did not comply fully with the Western system, and instead raised a new system in comparison with the Western model. On 11 May, 2004, Mr Joshua Cooper Ramo, Senior Consultant at Goldman Sachs and Adjunct Professor of Tsinghua University, published a research report named *The Beijing Consensus* through the UK-based think tank The Foreign Policy Centre, which triggered heated discussions about the Chinese model in international society (Ramo 2004). Chinese scholars have started lively debates on "universal values" and the "China model" since then. It is evident that China does not acknowledge the Western concept of universal values, but instead seeks a Chinese discourse based on long history and great legacy of civilization. This motivation is expressed clearly in Xi Jinping's proposal for the Chinese dream. This slogan indicates that China will not only be great power in material capabilities but be great in discursive power as well. With China's continuous rise on the world stage, the principle will drive China to create a new political model, rather than just follow the established political order.

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